

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SAM-01 L-03 OMB-01

DRC-01 /096 W

----- 080136

R 092330Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2402

INFO DIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 5958

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, EC

SUBJECT: GOE PLAYS MUSICAL CHAIRS -- FACT AND RUMOR

1. THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS HAVE BEEN LIVELY WITH RUMORED CHANGES IN THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE GOE INVOLVING SENIOR MILITARY PERSONNEL. OFFICIAL DENIALS -- NORMAL WHENEVER THE MEDIA CATCH WIND OF IMPENDING GOE ACTIONS--HAVE BEEN NOTABLY HALF-HEARTED AND THIS HAS, IN TURN, FUELED A CONTINUING WAVE OF SPECULATION OVER REPLACEMENTS WHICH, INCREASINGLY, ARE BEING PORTRAYED AS ESTABLISHED FACT.

2. TO DATE, THE ONLY HARD NEWS IS THAT VARIOUS TRANSFERS OF FIELD-GRADE ARMY OFFICERS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. THESE INCLUDE SOME SHIFTS IN POSTS OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AT THE SUB-CABINET LEVEL: THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PRICES, COL. MEDARDO SANCHEZ, TO BE MILITARY GOVERNOR AND BRIGADE COMMANDER AT LOJA; AND THE CHIEF OF SENDIP, THE PLACE'S PRESS SECRETARIAT, COL. BOLIVAR JARRIN, WHO WAS REPLACED BY MAJOR JACINTO ENCALADA. VARIOUS OTHERS, INCLUDING CEPE CHIEF COL. RENE VARGAS AND AGRARIAN REFORM DIRECTOR COL. FRANCISCO LARREA WERE CONFIRMED IN THEIR POSTS. IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE CHANGES, COL. RUBEN AYALA, UNDERSECRETARY OF FINANCE THROUGHOUT THE

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RODRIGUEZ GOVERNMENT, "HAS BEEN CALLED BY THE GOVERNMENT

TO PERFORM OTHER FUNCTIONS" -- AS YET UNSPECIFIED BUT RUMORED TO BE CHIEF OF THE GUAYAQUIL MILITARY ZONE OR GOVERNOR OF GUAYAS.

3. THESE MILITARY CHANGES WERE NOT UNEXPECTED, SINCE THE ARMY HAD TO MAKE SPACE FOR 24 RECENT GRADUATES, AT THE LT.COL/MAJOR LEVEL, OF THE GENERAL STAFF COURSE. THE CYCLE IS OBVIOUSLY INCOMPLETE AND WE WOULD EXPECT VARIOUS FURTHER SHIFTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

4. MORE INTRIGUING, HOWEVER, ARE THE CHANGES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED BUT ONLY HINTED AT. MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THESE ARE WOULD-BE SHIFTS OF ONE OR MORE OF THE THREE MILITARY CABINET MEMBERS WHO HAVE SERVED SINCE THE INSTALLATION OF THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN FEBRUARY 1972: NAVY CAPT. JARRIN, AT NATURAL RESOURCES; COL. RODRIGUEZ PALACIOS, AT PUBLIC WORKS; AND COL (AF) MALDONADO AT PUBLIC HEALTH. THIS HAS BEEN A MATTER OF OPEN PRESS SPECULATION FOR DAYS; THE NOTABLY IMPRECISE REPLIES OF DEFENSE MINISTRY AND PALACE SPOKESMAN HAVE ONLY SERVED TO FUEL THIS SPECULATION--DELIBERATELY SO, WE BELIEVE.

5. CHIEF TARGET IS OF COURSE JERRIN, SAID TO BE DISLIKED BY PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ BECAUSE OF HIS INDEPENDENCE IN POLICY MATTERS AND HIS TENDENCY TOWARD ANTI-FOREIGN BRINKMANSHIP IN PETROLEUM AFFAIRS. THE GOE HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED (WITH A STRAIGHT FACE) THAT SOME OTHER UPPER-LEVEL MILITARY SHIFTS WILL BE NECESSARY IN THE NEAR FUTURE "TO COMPLY WITH CERTAIN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY OBLIGATIONS OF THE REPRESENTATIONAL ORDER". COINCIDENT WITH THIS IS THE "HARD RUMOR", POSSIBLY SPREAD BY THE PALACE AS A TRIAL BALLOON, THAT JARRIN WILL GO TO WASHINGTON TO REPRESENT ECUADOR ON THE IADB. SOMEWHAT LESS HARD IS THE GUAYAQUIL REPORT THAT GUAYAS PROVINCE GOVERNOR RADM RENAN OLMEDO WILL SUCCEED TO THE POST. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN FLOATED BY THE NAVY TO ASSERT ITS TRADITIONAL CONTROL OVER THE MINISTRY OR, PERHAPS MORE LIKELY, MAY REPRESENT THE AMBITIOUS OLEMDO'S BID FOR A JOB MORE IN KEEPING WITH HIS RANK. WHOEVER DOES
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REPLACE THE DIFFICULT AND HYPER-NATIONALISTIC JARRIN-- IF INDEED HE IS REPLACED--WILL PROBABLY BE AN IMPROVEMENT FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.

6. COL. RODRIGUEZ PALACIOS, AN ARMY ENGINEER PERFORMING A TECHNOCRAT'S JOB AT PUBLIC WORKS, HAS HAD AN UNCONTROVERSIAL TENURE--MARKED OF LATE BY THE RUMORS OF KCKKV GRAFT WHICH INEVITABLY ARISE HERE IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

HIS SUCCESSOR IS REPORTEDLY COL. RAUL PUMA VELASCO, JUST RELIEVED AS CHIEF OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND OFFICIALLY DESTINED FOR SOME AS-YET UNSPECIFIED JOB "IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION". MALDONADO, AN AIR FORCE FLIGHT-SURGEON, WILL REPORTEDLY GO ABROAD, PRESUMABLY AS AN ATTACHE, BEING REPLACED BY "A SENIOR AIR FORCE GENERAL OFFICER". THIS SEEMS LIKE FAIRLY SOFT RUMOR, BUT IT RAISES THE INTRIGUING POSSIBILITY THAT THIS MAY BE THE PRESIDENT'S WAY OF BURYING JOINT STAFF CHIEF AND AIR FORCE COMMANDER BGEN IZURIETA, WHO IS KNOWN NOT TO BE POPULAR WITH RODRIGUEZ. LENDING SUBSTANCE TO THE POSSIBILITY TO BGEN MONTESINOS'S CLAIM, RAISED SEVERAL TIMES TO MEMBERS OF THE MISSION, THAT HE WILL SUCCEED TO THE FAE COMMAND BEFORE YEAR END.

7. FINALLY, TO ADD FURTHER SPICE TO THE STEW, WERE FRONT-PAGE STORIES FROM GUAYAQUIL, UNCONFIRMED BUT VERY AUTHORITATIVE-SOUNDING, REGARDING IMMINENT PROMOTIONS TO GLAG AND GENERAL OFFICER RANK. ACCORDING TO EL UNIVERSO, SIX NAVY CAPTAINS ARE NOW IN THE ZONE FOR REAR ADMIRAL (INCLUDING JARRIN), AND THREE WILL BE SELECTED WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. NINE COLONELS OF THE ARMY WERE SAID TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR BRIGADIER GENERAL, WITH FIVE TO BE PROMOTED EARLY NEXT MONTH. AMONG THESE WERE SAID TO BE EDUCATION MINISTER DURAN AND EX-SUB-SECRETARY OF FINANCE AYALA. IF THESE PROMOTIONS MATERIALIZE THEY WILL LIKELY REQUIRE SOME FURTHER PERSONNEL SHIFTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY PERSONNEL, PRESS COMMENTS, CABINET, POLITICAL SITUATION, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974QUITO05958
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740250-1154
From: QUITO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740963/aaaacbmd.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 SEP 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2003 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOE PLAYS MUSICAL CHAIRS -- FACT AND RUMOR
TAGS: PGOV, EC, (MEDARDO SANCHEZ), (BOLIVAR JARRIN), (JACINTO ENCALADA), (RENE VARGAS), (FRANCISCO LARREA), (RUBEN AYALA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005